

1. DESCRIBE THE PRACTICE PROPOSED FOR RECOGNITION, AND LIST ITS OBJECTIVES. DETAIL HOW THE PRACTICE IS INNOVATIVE AND HOW IT PROMOTES HIGH STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

Lift Off! (Learning Is For Today & Our Future's Foundation!) is an annual multi-discipline series of activities coordinated by this school's Media Center to nurture life-long readers and learners, and to promote a cooperative, positive climate within the school. Although the name of the theme and some specific activities vary each year to avoid staleness and to address specific needs, the annual program always has two main components:

A. ***Lift Off with Reading!*** is a school-wide celebration of reading that includes a reading incentive program, Dr. Seuss Day, and a Lunch Bunch program.

1. **The reading incentive program** challenges students to increase their away-from-school reading time. Students are not bribed to read with material rewards, but instead are encouraged to read for the intrinsic pleasure it gives. One way this is done is through author visits sponsored by the PTA. The theme changes each year, but the objective of nurturing life-long readers is always the same. It is a relatively simple program that challenges students to meet reading goals both individually and as a school community, and to keep track of their reading for accountability purposes. Their progress is recorded publicly in the main hall of the school

2. **Dr. Seuss Day** involves a metamorphosis of this school into Seussville. Several staff members decorate the halls the night before so that when students come to school the next day, they feel as though they are entering a Dr. Seuss book. Before school on the playground, several teachers wear words from Dr. Seuss books on their coats, and students who read them are rewarded with a special bookmark. The words are grade-level appropriate and all students who attempt this activity succeed. During the day, classes host guest readers from the community, the 7th grade produces and presents a video of a newscast from Seussville, lower grade students present a play and/or musical performances about reading, and students come to the Media Center which is a student-run Green Eggs and Ham Café for the day. There, older students serve as waiters and waitresses while younger students order from a menu of gourmet Seuss. The waiters and waitresses then read the selections chosen from the menu to the "customers". The students often leave small change for tips which is used to buy books for needy children in the community.

3. **The Lunch Bunch** is a series of small-group gatherings of students who have successfully reached their reading goal. They eat lunch with the principal and discuss the books they have read. They thus are accountable for their reading, are given a chance to speak publicly about their books, are challenged to critique their books, and are given the opportunity to know the principal better.

B. ***Lift Off with Cross-Discipline Units!*** are collaboratively planned projects that classroom teachers develop with special area teachers, coordinated through the Media Center and loosely structured around the yearly theme.

1. One example is the ***Lift Off with First Grade!*** project which is a unit on multiculturalism involving literature, art, geography, music, language arts and computer literacy.. The starting point for this project is literature. Last year it was *Flat Stanley* by Jeff Brown; this year it is *Gifts* by JoEllen Bogart and Barbara Reid. In both books a character travels, and this school uses that as a springboard to study the geography, music, dance and folklore of different

places throughout the United States and the world. The classroom teachers engage their students in writing letters to people they know who might live in or visit the areas they are studying. They graph the responses they receive. They also teach the children about the geography and some social customs of the various places, as well as poetry about the regions. Meanwhile, the Media Specialist teaches the children folklore and helps them find information about the regions on the computer. The art teacher makes puppets with them centered on the characters in the folk stories they have learned, and her students make costumed dolls of children wearing the native dress of the areas studied. The gym teachers teach the students dances representative of the regions, and the music teacher teaches them songs from the different areas. The technology teacher then works with the students to prepare a Power Point presentation about what they have learned. The culminating event is a presentation of the dances, music, and poetry the children have learned, as well as the Power Point show. Afterwards, the students and their guests are treated to a reception prepared by their parents that features the foods of the ethnic groups and regions they have studied.

The objectives of the *Lift Off!* project are to increase the amount of time children spend reading in the belief that all children can become enthusiastic life-long readers if they discover the pleasure reading can give; to integrate learning by infusing art, music, and technology into a coordinated unit of study; and to unify the school by providing an overall theme for the year that teachers work together to support and to develop according to the needs of their curriculum.

Lift Off! is innovative in that the intrinsic pleasures of reading are emphasized as the reward rather than material awards, in that it coordinates several activities to nurture reading rather than just a simple reading incentive program, and in that it coordinates multidiscipline, multicultural units with the overall school reading theme.

Lift Off! promotes high student achievement because it promotes reading and students who read, succeed; because it employs lessons in different disciplines addressing different learning styles by using different teaching methods; because the coordinated lessons among the disciplines reinforce the learning for the students; and because it increases student knowledge and understanding of different parts of the world.

2. LIST THE SPECIFIC CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS, INCLUDING THE CROSS-CONTENT WORKPLACE READINESS STANDARDS, ADDRESSED BY THE PRACTICE AND DESCRIBE HOW THE PRACTICE ADDRESSES THOSE STANDARDS. PROVIDE AN EXAMPLE TO SUBSTANTIATE YOUR RESPONSE.

The **Cross-Content and Workplace Readiness Standards** addressed by *Lift Off!* are:

2.0 All students will use information, technology and other tools – exemplified by the first grade Power Point presentation and by the seventh grade video presentation for Dr. Seuss Day.

3.0 All students will use critical thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills – exemplified by the students' Lunch Bunch discussions about their books and by the first grade research about different places.

4.0 All students will demonstrate self-management skills – exemplified by reaching the school-wide and individual reading goals and by the student-run Green Eggs and Ham Café.

The **Core Curriculum Standards** addressed by *Lift Off!* are:

1.2 (**Visual and Performing Arts**): All students will refine perceptual, physical and technical

skills through creative dance, music theater, and/or visual arts – exemplified by the first graders as they perform the dances and music from other regions, and by lower grade students when they perform musical selections and skits on Dr. Seuss Day.

3.1 (**Language Arts Literacy**): All students will speak for a variety of purposes – exemplified during Lunch Bunch discussions, during the Dr. Seuss assembly, and during the first grade culminating event.

3.2 All students will listen actively in a variety of situations – exemplified in the Green Eggs and Ham Café when students listen to other students read Dr. Seuss books, and in the Media Center when first graders listen to folktales from different areas of the country and world.

3.3 All students will write in clear, concise organized language – exemplified when the first graders write to people from other places and when the seventh graders write a newscast from Seussville.

3.4 All students will read a variety of materials – exemplified in the variety of materials chosen by students to read during the reading incentive program.

4.3 (**Mathematics**) All students will connect mathematics to other learning – exemplified when students add the minutes for the reading program, when they count the change in the Green Eggs and Ham Café, and when they graph the responses they get from letters they send to other areas of the country and world.

6.5 (**Social Studies**) All students will acquire historical understanding of varying cultures – exemplified in the first grade exploration of different parts of the world.

6.7 All students will acquire geographical understanding – exemplified in the first grade exploration of different areas and in their mapping of their project travels.

3. DESCRIBE THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS THAT THE PRACTICE ADDRESSES. DOCUMENT THE ASSESSMENT MEASURES USED TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PRACTICE HAVE BEEN MET. PROVIDE ASSESSMENTS AND DATA TO SHOW HOW THE PRACTICE MET THESE NEEDS.

The educational needs *Lift Off!* addresses are the need to become independent, lifelong readers and learners, and the need to become citizens of the modern world, using technology and understanding other cultures.

The measures used to assess the extent to which the objectives have been met include: the number of participants in the reading incentive program; the degree to which the students meet the reading challenge set before them; the number of participants in the Lunch Bunch and the quality of their discussions; the circulation figures of the Media Center's collection during the program; and individual teacher's evaluations of the classroom work in the cross-discipline units.

Assessment is also made informally by the positive responses from parents and students about the project and their eagerness to participate each year, by an increased interest by students in reading Dr. Seuss books and other books highlighted in the Media Center throughout the year, and by the expanding nature of the project – each year it grows a little as more teachers think of new ways to work cooperatively to nurture reading and to develop multi-discipline units.

The assessments show that the objectives of *Lift Off!* are achieved. For instance, approximately 90% of the students participate voluntarily in the reading incentive program. Approximately 75% of those students reach their individual goals and are invited to a Lunch Bunch session. The principal reports that all participants have been able to discuss their books

meaningfully, relating such information as the nature of the plot, the characters involved, the setting, and the parts they liked and disliked about the book.

The Media Center's circulation increases each year during the months of the reading incentive program. For instance, the average number of books checked out during the 2000-2001 school year during the months without the program was 1606; during the program, the average number rose to 2585 –a 60% increase. Furthermore, as the program has grown, the total circulation for the year has steadily increased. For instance, the total circulation in 1997-1998 was 15,415 but it had risen to 18,372 by 2000-2001, indicating a growing interest in reading among this school's students as the joy of reading is nurtured.

Individual classroom teachers evaluate the work their students do. In the *Lift Off with First Grade!* aspect of this program, for example, all students successfully create a Power Point presentation and participate in the culminating event that showcases their work as well as their singing and dancing skills to their parents, other grades and community guests. Feedback from the audience has always been positive.

4. DESCRIBE HOW YOU WOULD REPLICATE THE PRACTICE IN ANOTHER SCHOOL AND/OR DISTRICT.

Lift Off! can be replicated in any school with the cooperation and collaboration of staff, administration, parents and students.

To replicate *Lift Off!*, the Media Specialist, or other member of the staff, must be willing to organize and coordinate the activities. This person should evaluate the specific needs of the school, develop a theme that will work for the school, and meet with other staff to enthuse them about the project and to plan and coordinate their efforts. This person should also serve as the liaison between the staff and administration concerning all the details of the project.

The administration should be willing to provide mutual planning time for its staff. Also, to replicate the Lunch Bunch, the principal should be willing to commit regular blocks of lunch time to eat and talk with small groups of students.

The parents should support the project to make it successful. They should encourage their children to read at home and some of them should be willing to help with the multicultural reception at the end of the first grade program. The key to achieving high parental involvement is communication – through newsletters, the PTA, phone calls, and newspaper publicity.

The students are also needed to replicate this project. They should be willing to read, to learn and to share their talents. In the reading incentive part of the program especially, participation is always voluntary, so student involvement depends on student motivation. To help ensure that students do participate, staff should collectively and individually encourage and invite students to do so. Once students try it, they usually continue. Changing the name of the theme each year seems to help because students always look forward to seeing what the new theme will be. The best guarantee of student involvement is the successful completion of the program one-year – it provides enthusiasm and momentum for the next year.

Another important key for replicating the project is to feature it on prominent hallway displays. Not only does this enhance the physical appearance of the building and showcase student achievement, but it also serves as publicity for the project and reinforces the unified, cooperative climate of the school.